

There is something extremely captivating to the imagination in the thought of the first rearing of the noble edifice, on whose ruins they seem to look back, as if they may be imagined as addressing them—

“O, our coevals, remnants of yourselves!”

indeed, every thing connected with them is calculated to awaken the fancy of the poet, and the reflections of the moralist.

In going from Patley Bridge towards Ripon, about three miles from the latter, the fields, which leads the pedestrian through a sequestered burial-ground belong to a retired and beautifully wooded lane; at the bottom of which he is brought into the ruins of the Abbess' Abbey, which, by this simple route strikes much more powerfully on the imagination, than if approached by the more formal walks through the pleasure grounds of Studley. In these magnificent ruins, the spectator must be rapt in delight; now tracing the nave, its transept, its cloisters, now turning to enjoy the sweetly solemn effect of the old oaks and Birch enliven by their light foliage the dark masses of shade thrown out by the cliffs that rise around appear like natural walls, affording a delightful variety of trees, whilst the tender saplings spring from between the crevices. Part of the cloisters which murmurs responsive to the scene; the arches cast a deep and dark reflection on the ruins wave lofty trees, tipped with light foliage, which is also seen peeping in as they reflect the light from each other. Opposite to this secluded spot is a small stream, speaking from which a clear echo is returned in a few seconds, as if it floated along the passages of the roofless abbey. Inexpressibly interesting are these aerial sounds, which should seem as if the spirits of the cowed brethren still loved to linger in the place where they were in a state of mortal existence—still loved to keep up a link of association with the “warm in life,” may have been treading just before on the ashes which, at the same time, glowed with their wonted fires. It did indeed seem the voice of past ages:

“Vox et præterea nihil.”

but how eloquent the response which calls up the scenes and actors of so long ago. It is such thoughts as these that invest the venerable Yew Trees, the silent witnesses of the decays of nature, with so much interest, and renders their preservation so desirable. They appear to be treated with the reverence due to them; a low wall hides their weakness, whence they would otherwise be seen to the most advantage; and a paltry ivy beneath their branches, on which, worst injury of all, the marks of the despoiling hand are visible, the ground underneath is strewn with fragments of larger limbs, probably torn down, which meaner wood might have been applied with equal utility.

PLATE XXII.—THE GREAT ASH AT WOBURN

THE Ash, from the lightness of its foliage, the graceful sweep of its branches, its stem, has been called the Venus of the Forest; nor is it less admirable for utility than for beauty. It is no timber, excepting that of the Oak, that is more generally in use. It is extremely hard, as it will grow well in almost any soil, but its shade is accounted unfavourable to the growth of other trees. It leaves early, and displays them late, it is less desirable for avenues and pleasure-grounds, where fine foliage, there is no tree more beautiful.

The Great Ash at Woburn stands in the Park of His Grace the Duke of Bedford, from the mansion, and is an extraordinary specimen of the size which this tree will attain. It is ninety feet high, from the ground to the top of its branches; and the stem is

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